

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier... CIA Mole?

By William Greider

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If one collected conversational crumbs from some of the best tables in Washington, it would seem that a great spy novel is unfolding in our midst, a plot of treachery searching for its real-life villain.

Perhaps it will be the next great scandal that someday rocks the American government.

Or maybe it is a lot of empty luncheon gossip, laced with the political mischief and bureaucratic malice peculiar to the nation's capital.

The subject is spies, and the unanswered question is whether the Central Intelligence Agency, after all its other troubles of recent years, has another one much more serious. Has the CIA been penetrated somehow by a

Soviet "mole," an intelligence officer who has burrowed upward, high enough to betray class and country in the manner of Britain's Kim Philby? Or, perhaps less dramatically, is there a bitter soul selling our secrets for cash?

The CIA director, Stansfield Turner, felt required recently to deny it, while assuring the public that Langley is ever vigilant against the possibility. No one can prove that there is not a "mole" somewhere in the intelligence community. Likewise, no one has anything beyond speculative theories to suggest that there is.

The concept of the mole gained popular currency with John Le Carre's book "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy," in which his persevering hero, George Smiley of Britain's intelligence serv-

ice, uncovers the Soviet spy who had worked his way to the head of MI6, the British counterpart of the CIA.

Whether or not there is a mole high in the CIA, he, she or it has been invoked to pay off old bureaucratic scores, fortify the cause of tighter secrecy laws or raise suspicions about present or former top CIA officials.

In recent weeks, some important names have expressed concern or asked questions out loud. Former CIA director Richard M. Helms, for instance, remarked to New York magazine:

"The Kampiles case raises the question of whether or not there has been infiltration of the United States intelligence community or government at a significant level."

See MOLE, A12, Col. 1

MOLE, From A1

William Kampiles, an ex-CIA watch officer, was convicted Friday on espionage charges, accused of selling a very secret CIA manual on satellite surveillance to the Soviets. The peculiar circumstances of his access and arrest upset many former intelligence officers and some senators who oversee the subject.

"Deeply disturbed" is the phrase. The case suggested to many that either the CIA is grossly loose and incompetent in its own security or there is a more sinister explanation. Some think both are plausible.

The Kampiles trial was not exactly reassuring, though it did seem to lend weight to the case for incompetence over treachery. Among other things, it was revealed that 13 very secret manuals, not just one are missing. The CIA went beyond its standard response of "no comment" to make this statement: "A review of security procedures within the CIA is now under way."

Helms, for one, was not comforted, reading newspaper accounts of the trial. "There are," he said, "enough anomalies in that case to raise some unresolved questions... I still think there are anomalies and unexplained questions."

Former secretary of state Henry A.

Kissinger has made similar remarks around town. Kissinger, it is said, asks the same questions others raise: Is it possible Kampiles was somehow a pawn, used to conceal another Soviet agent within? Is it plausible that America's intelligence apparatus has been somehow compromised?

For whatever it means, Kissinger has lent his name to a promotional blurb for a new book by Edward Jay Epstein, "Legend," which devotes 316 pages of closely argued fact and theory to the proposition that the CIA was "turned inside out" long before the Kampiles case.

Epstein embraces the view of retired counterintelligence officers who believe their agency has accepted a fake Soviet defector and thereby buried the warning from an earlier defector who said that a "mole" does exist high up. Kissinger thinks the book raises "vital questions."

Perhaps the most bizarre reaction is from former director William E. Colby, whose battle with the counterintelligence folks over domestic spying and other matters was well-aided three years ago. Colby is going around

to public appearances and declaring without a trace of humor: "I am not a mole."

Who said he was? Well, nobody did exactly, but that is one of the malicious suggestions afloat in the town's gossip, posed with oblique questions and impish smiles. Colby, who is now a lawyer in private practice, is not amused.

"In my career," Colby said dryly, "I've been accused of just about everything. I answer the allegations. I don't get emotional."

Readers who wish for a clear and definitive answer to the "mole" question will be disappointed. The subject is all smoke and no flames. It leads into a mind-numbing thicket of old cases, lingering coincidences and unproven suppositions.

On the surface of logic, it is easy enough to observe — as many former intelligence officers do — that probability argues strongly for the existence of a planted Soviet agent somewhere in the U.S. intelligence apparatus. If the Russians were able to penetrate the British, German, French and Italian spy organizations, as they have over the years, why should America's be immune? In this twilight realm the strongest argument for the existence of an American "mole" is of spies, that none was ever caught.

Beyond that, however, the evidence gets terribly tangled. Was Nosenko lying? If so, was Galitsin telling the truth? If Igor was a Soviet-controlled double, why did the CIA send Shadrin to his tragic rendezvous in Vienna? Who was Anatoly Filatov and how did the KGB catch him? Why is Fedora still trusted by the FBI? And what of poor Sasha who was fingered by Igor?

You get the idea. These are all deadly serious questions that intelligence professionals kick around among themselves. If they knew firm answers, it might convince them that the Soviets must have had some inside help or, perhaps more scary, that they are still creating false leads to protect someone still inside.

Meanwhile the Russian intelligence officers must be having a good laugh over the Washington gossip. Perhaps they are analyzing it, much the way the CIA would, in search of other explanations, to discover the auxiliary reasons why so much "mole" talk should surface in this particular season.

The KGB analysts might conclude — as Colby and others have — that it is a symptom of institutional stress.

The CIA Mole Controversy



By Milton Clapper—The Washington Post

Some principal figures in controversy over possible CIA infiltration, clockwise from top right: Henry Kissinger, James Angleton, William Kampiles, Richard Helms and William Colby. The Kampiles spy case, in the view of Kissinger and Helms, raises unresolved questions, such as was the former CIA watch officer a pawn for the Soviets. Ex-director Colby admits "we obviously have a problem with security . . . a lessening of discipline, morale, commitment . . ." Many in intelligence community blame Colby for those problems. In 1975 he fired Angleton and reorganized counterintelligence. The argument still rages over whether the action crippled CIA's security.

The CIA has been buffeted by public scandal, political reorganizations, leaks and investigations.

Too many of them, according to its supporters. That experience sowed bitterness, especially among those old hands who were "reorganized" out of

their clandestine careers; the sour public atmosphere has loosened tongues, inside and out.

"We obviously have a problem with security," Colby said. "That's different from having a 'mole.' There's obviously a lessening of discipline, morale,

commitment, if you will."

The ranks of the retired include many who blame Colby for those problems, particularly his handling as director of the sensational CIA scandals in 1975. Colby, an adroit political operator, went public with the agency's embarrassing sins as a way to calm the country and assure it that the ugly past was truly past. Whether Colby's strategy made things better or worse for the agency is still a hot topic among old boys who believe, in any case, that he violated the cardinal rules of "clandestinity," as one of them calls it.

Colby and others take the current distress over security and turn it into another argument in favor of a congressional charter for the CIA, including expanded powers of self-policing. "Until we get a statute passed and have some better discipline over employees, you're not going to solve that problem," Colby said.

This political argument is aimed at the next Congress, which will be asked to approve a new controlling charter for CIA. Many of its partisans are arguing that now is the time to let the agency slide quietly back into something resembling the "deep cover" that is enjoyed for 25 years.

Thomas Powers, author of a forthcoming biography of Helms, suggests there is a kind of psychic revenge involved in all the scary gossip emanating from people who used to pride themselves on total secrecy.

"My own feeling is that it's the intelligence community's way of getting back at the public," Powers said. "It's a way of saying that you've got to leave us alone and let us do it . . . See what happens when you open Pandora's box—all these ugly things come out."

In a sense, the public is now hearing bits and pieces of a discreet war that has gone on secretly within the CIA for nearly two decades. Epstein's book, in particular, described in extraordinary detail the long debate between the CIA's counterintelligence shop under James J. Angleton and foreign intelligence officers such as Colby who thought Angleton's folks saw Red agents under every bed. Colby fired Angleton in 1975 and reorganized counterintelligence; the argument still rages over whether Colby's action crippled the agency's security or merely wiped out its paranoia.

This struggle originated in 1961 when a Soviet defector named Galitsin (code-named Stone) reported that

a "mole" had gained access into the agency's vital core. The search for the "mole" began in earnest complicated by other Russian defectors who followed, telling a bewildering series of contradictory stories.

While counterintelligence scrutinized each defector for hard truth, suspicions also were raised about fellow CIA officers. According to various sources, at least three officers of some rank have come under suspicion as "moles" at different times and, while the evidence did not convince the CIA that any of these men were disloyal each case left a residue of ambiguity or continuing suspicion. Some people are still rattling those old skeletons.

In his memoirs, "Honorably Men," Colby described how the internal suspicions raised by counterintelligence officers "were actually hurting" the agency's ability to operate.

"One [officer] had come under suspicion through a gross leap in logic," Colby wrote. "A defector had remarked that the Soviets were in contact with a CIA officer in a particular city. By a process of elimination, suspicion had settled on this one. But absolutely no other evidence was ever found to support it, even after careful check. Nonetheless, the officer was sent off to a distant and dead-end post for a number of years as a result."

In any case, the bad bile between Angleton's admirers and Colby's contributes a lot of the poison to the present atmosphere. So does the bad bile between Colby and Helms, who was convicted of lying to the Senate. Helms' friends feel the ex-director would never have faced this disgrace if Colby had handled the whole business of secrets differently.

In the short run, this new fear of "moles" may help attain some political objectives for various interests. The FBI is campaigning again for more agents to chase down Soviet spies. Opponents of the arms limitation talks are using this subject as yet another reason not to trust the Russians. The official intelligence community is fortified in its quest for stiffer secrecy restrictions. The climate of suspicion may help persuade Congress that, just as in the old days, it really doesn't want to know all of the dirty secrets after all.

In the long run, however, the "mole" theory also may damage the CIA, if it creates another layer of public paranoia about secret operations and agency trustworthiness.